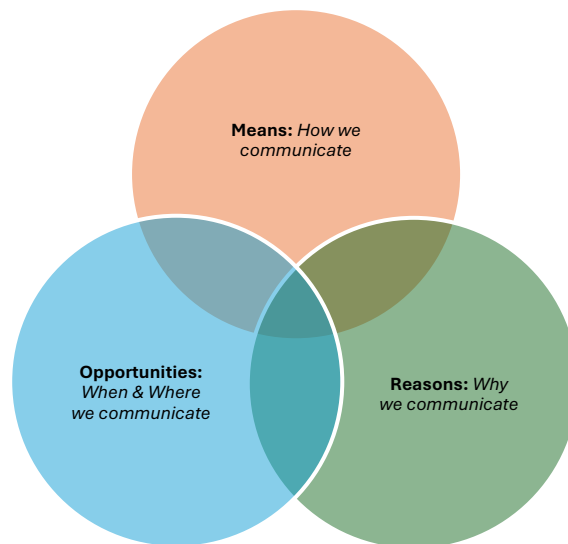




Effective communication is important for everyone and understanding how to support your child's communication is key. There are many different ways to communicate.

The Means, Reasons and Opportunities model has 3 key areas, that help us to understand communication.



Means: How

Children can talk in lots of different ways. Some use words, others use signs, pictures, or special devices. Some use body language, like pointing, waving, or showing facial expressions. Every child is different, and they will use the ways that work best for them.

Examples:

- Talking
- Pointing or using gestures
- Facial expression such as smiling
- Using pictures or symbols
- Sign language (like Makaton or BSL)
- Using a communication device

Why This Matters: When we understand how a child communicates, we can help them share their thoughts and feelings in the best way for them.

Parent Tip: Give your child lots of ways to communicate. If speaking is hard, try using pictures, signs, or devices. Always notice and respond to how they try to communicate, no matter how.

Reason: *Why***Children communicate for many reasons:**

- To say hello or goodbye
- To ask for something
- To tell how they feel
- To make choices
- To ask questions
- To share stories



Why This Matters: All communication has a reason. If we understand why a child is trying to talk, we can help them more.

Parent Tip: Help your child say what they need or feel—any way that works for them.

Opportunities: *When & Where* we communicate

Children need time and the right setting to communicate well. Quiet, relaxed times are best.

Good Times to Talk:

- Mealtimes
- Playing together
- Going for a walk
- Reading a book
- Bedtime routines



Why This Matters: If children don't get a chance to talk, they may feel left out or frustrated. The more chances they get, the better they'll learn to communicate.

Parent Tip: Create calm spaces to talk. Turn off loud noise or bright lights if needed. Give your child time to think and answer. This helps them feel safe to speak.

How to Talk with Your Child

- Use simple words
- Repeat important things
- Give your child time to answer
- Follow their interests
- Support and praise their efforts.



If you have tried using these strategies and you are still concerned about the impact of your child's communication differences, you can:

- Look on our website for further information and advice: [York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust - Speech and language therapy \(yorkhospitals.nhs.uk\)](https://yorkhospitals.nhs.uk)
- Contact us via our 'Request for Help' line – see our website for further details